## Canadians reject cellphone companies' ideas for changing the Wireless Code

(Ottawa, 24 February 2017) A new survey shows that the *Wireless Code*, a framework of cellphone rights and responsibilities created by the CRTC in 2013 to protect mobile phone users, is virtually unknown by those whom it is mean to serve. Research undertaken by the Forum for Research and Policy in Communications just before a major CRTC hearing to review the effectiveness of the *Code* found that almost 80% of Canadians are unaware the Code exists.

In addition, the Forum research showed strong opposition from Canadians to several changes proposed by wireless service providers to the *Code*. The proposals arose during the CRTC's review of the *Code* which began in mid-2016 and included a public hearing from February 6 to February 9, 2017 in which Canadians, public interest groups and wireless service providers participated.

Wireless service providers told the CRTC that the *Code* should be changed to require consumers who want to cancel their plans early to reimburse providers for sales promotions, discounts or free gifts they received: 79.7% of Canadians disagreed with this idea, which might create new barriers to contract switching. Wireless service providers also generally opposed the idea of limiting the charges wireless service providers levy to unlock the cellphones for which subscribers are paying: 75.5% of Canadians said the CRTC should cap such charges, which were also identified as a barrier to switching.

Public interest organizations asked the CRTC to change the *Code* to let Canadians have a copy of the key features of wireless plans before they sign wireless contracts, to facilitate comparison shopping. While wireless service providers generally opposed this idea, arguing that consumers could easily access this information online, 94.2% of Canadians agreed that it would be very or somewhat useful to have a 'critical information summary' of a cellphone plan while shopping.

The survey also found that most Canadians (79.4%) remain unaware of the *Code*, that more than a third (43.2%) had experienced cellphone bill shock in the previous year, and that more than half (61.6%) had not obtained a better cellphone rate by negotiating with their service provider in the previous four years.

The survey of 1503 people across Canada yielded results with a margin of error of plus or minus 3.02%, 19 times out of 20, and was conducted by Access Research on behalf of the Forum from 30 January to 3 February 2017, using English-language and French-language survey questionnaires. The survey report, including detailed results and the survey questionnaires, is available online at the Forum's website: <a href="http://frpc.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/2017-Wireless-Code-FRPC-survey-24-Feb-2017-1.pdf">http://frpc.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/2017-Wireless-Code-FRPC-survey-24-Feb-2017-1.pdf</a>.

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